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Hegel: Analytic Philosophy's Pharmakon

In this paper, I argue that Hegel is the 'pharmakon' of analytic philosophy. By this, I mean that Hegel can be treated as both analytic philosophy's 'poison' and its 'cure'. In Section I, I argue that Hegel has been vilified for two main reasons – stylistic and cultural – and that these forms of critique have developed into the respective charges of charlatanism and irrelevance. I then offer a criticism of the charges of charlatanism and irrelevance. In Section II, I argue (using the second meaning of 'pharmakon') that the revival of interest in Hegel's philosophical work in the Anglophone world since the 1970s is mainly due to (a) the revival of interest in Aristotelianism since Saul Kripke's/Hilary Putnam's work on natural kinds and Elizabeth Anscombe's/Philippa Foot's/Putnam's opposition to the fact/value distinction; (b) the scholarly rehabilitation of Hegel's theories by philosophers such as Robert Pippin, Terry Pinkard, Fred Beiser, Robert Stern, and Stephen Houlgate; and (c) the Sellars-inspired epistemology and philosophy of mind of John McDowell and Robert Brandom. (a) and (c), I believe, has led some contemporary analytic theorists to view Hegel in very positive ways, as arguably the 'cure' for analytic philosophy. It is, therefore, perhaps fitting that a Hegelian principle – the principle of internal critique – plays a significant role in not just analytic philosophy's rapprochement with Hegel but in the gradual erosion of the analytic-Continental divide as well.

I

Hegel is one of the few philosophers who have aroused as much contempt as they have admiration. In academic philosophy, Hegel came to be arguably the main target of attack by the founders of the analytic movement, Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore.¹ As Paul Redding writes, "[f]or Russell, the revolutionary innovations in logic starting in the last decades of the

¹ Though one may claim that Russell and Moore's rejections of idealism were in fact directed at *British* idealists, such as Bradley and Green, it should be clear that the Russell-Moore critique of idealism is principally directed at British Idealism's *pater patria* – Hegel. The battle-cry for the founding of analytic philosophy is probably best expressed in this paragraph from Russell's *A History of Western Philosophy*:

"Modern analytical empiricism [...] differs from that of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume by its incorporation of mathematics and its development of a powerful logical technique. It is thus able, in regard to certain problems, to achieve definite answers, which have the quality of science rather than of philosophy. It has the advantage, in comparison with the philosophies of the system-builders, of being able to tackle its problems one at a time, instead of having to invent at one stroke a block theory of the whole universe. Its methods, in this respect, resemble those of science. I have no doubt that, in so far as philosophical knowledge is possible, it is by such methods that it must be sought; I have also no doubt that, by these methods, many ancient problems are completely soluble." (B. Russell, 1945: 834)

nineteenth century had destroyed Hegel's metaphysics by overturning the Aristotelian logic on which, so Russell claimed, it was based, and in line with this dismissal, Hegel came to be seen within the analytic movement as an historical figure of little genuine philosophical interest".² Furthermore, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that part of the mantra of the Logical Positivist movement of the Vienna Circle, with its aim to commit metaphysics, theology, and arguably ethics to the flames, was a reaction to Hegelianism, which was increasingly perceived as a pernicious and sickly philosophical position which needed to be disposed of, because it was ostentatiously Aristotelian. To quote Angelica Nuzzo on this issue:

... Rudolf Carnap's seminal attacks to metaphysical thinking of which Hegel was seen as the champion, as well as Bertrand Russell's and G. E. Moore's rejection of his "idealism" have sufficed to make the case for the radical distance separating Hegel from analytic philosophy in its very inception.³

For philosophers such as Russell, Moore, Carnap, Mach, and Schlick, the development of mathematics, logic, natural science, and formal semantics meant that philosophy could now receive the welcome antidote to cure it from the pathology of Hegelianism.⁴ The question now is why did these philosophers regard Hegel in such a light, why did they consider Hegel as a poison to philosophical thought?

The first reason for this is a stylistic difference between Hegel's writing and the writing of Moore et al. Reading certain passages from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic* is often a taxing task – as Fred Beiser writes, it is "the intellectual equivalent of chewing gravel".⁵ Hegel's writing is filled with verbose terminology, obscure expressions, and convoluted syntax. This stands in contrast to the more down-to-earth exoteric prose of philosophers such as Moore, whose writing style is easier to follow and digest. Indeed, the analytic tradition prides itself on a clear and accessible writing style as a necessary device for good philosophical thought, which means that the work of those whose prose is at times impenetrable is taken to be of less value than those who express their ideas in a clearer fashion. The basic premise behind the connection between clarity and philosophical virtue, and obscurity and philosophical vice, is that clearer writing aims to dialectically engage one's reader or opponent, which is something that obscure writing fails to do. An obscure point is

² P. Redding, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel/#Bib>

³ A. Nuzzo, 2010: 1.

⁴ To quote Beiser here: "From the 1920s to the 1950s, except for exercises in exorcism, an interest in Hegel had to be private and secret, something better read in the loo". (F. C. Beiser, 2007: 80)

⁵ Beiser, 2005: 1.

sometimes a cover for intellectual confusion on the part of the writer. Furthermore, obscure writing is usually not the kind of writing to invite possible criticism (whether this is acceptance or rejection of the point being made), since one cannot reasonably judge a point to be good/bad, right/wrong, acceptable/unacceptable if the kind of point one is confronted by is shrouded in mystery. This is often why, when one is confronted with an obscure concept or idea, the natural reaction is to withhold assent to *any* understanding of the concept or idea until the matter has been clarified. To put it in the form of an analogy, reflecting on obscure concepts, etc. is like trying to firmly grasp an eel. With clear and unambiguous claims, the meaning of the claims is immediately accessible for rational agents to reflect upon, with the consequence that interpretations and judgements about the claims can be genuinely made. To put the point in a more Sellarsian way, a clear point is one which will figure in the logical space of reasons, the locus of justification, whereas an obscure point will not feature in this space. Thus, mysticism and obscurity, because they cannot figure in the space of reasons, can be seen as (i) aiming to cover trivial or shallow points and impress the reader with a veil of complex terminology – following Harry Frankfurt (2005), this is often why obscure remarks are labelled as ‘bullshit’; or (ii) aiming to cover the obscurantist’s own lack of understanding of the relevant concept/topic – to quote John Searle’s famous remark: “... if you can’t say it clearly you don’t understand it yourself”;⁶ or (iii) aiming to win debates by forcing one’s opponent to become speechless or concede that the point cannot be refuted. Unsurprisingly, (i), (ii), and (iii) all count as serious failings; for a large number of analytic philosophers, Hegel commits at least one of these epistemic vices, given his obscurity.

However, before rushing to condemn Hegel for his stylistic flaws, a crucial point must be made: clarity is hardly a ubiquitous property of analytic philosophical writing. At the core of Frege’s ‘Sense and Reference’ lies the notorious expression ‘mode of presentation’, an obscure idea that has prompted varieties of interpretation in the secondary literature on Frege;⁷ Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* is hardly a paradigm of philosophic clarity; and more recently, Christopher Peacocke’s work on mental content is challenging and demanding to follow. One could go on. Certainly, Hegel is very obscure, and all things being equal, clarity is always to be preferred to obscurity. However, the reason why some philosophers write obscurely is not necessarily due to a sophistical motive, etc., but rather sometimes because of the difficulty of the problems that they are dealing with: Frege, one of the most important and celebrated figures in analytic philosophy, in working on one of the most fundamental issues

⁶ J. Searle, 1983: x.

⁷ See, for example, the following works: Burge (1979, 1990), Beaney (1996), Carl (1994), and Dummett (1981).

in philosophical logic, could not find a clearer way of expressing what he meant by ‘Sense’, not because his point was a shallow one or that he was intending to trick his readers or did not know what he intended to say, but because he was confronting a very deep philosophical issue, the depth of which pushes human language and cognition to its limits. The same can be said for philosophers like Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Wittgenstein, Wilfrid Sellars, John McDowell, and Robert Brandom, who all write quite obscurely (some more than others), but who confront philosophic questions of immense complexity and sensitivity. Whilst this does not completely exonerate them from writing obscurely, my point here is that any derision of their work on grounds of obscurity is often unfair, because their critics fail to appreciate just how difficult are the questions that they ask.

Furthermore, the prevalent worries about Hegel’s writing also seem to stem from the great *hermeneutical* struggles that the analytic tradition⁸ has in interpreting Hegel’s *Phenomenology*: the text is structured in a specific way to place the reader in the position of the work’s protagonist, namely human thought.⁹ This is why Hegel intends *us* to transform our conception of ourselves and the object of knowledge as we move through thought’s dramatic and heady development through history. Of course, such a way of writing philosophy – as a kind of *Lesedrama* – is not just unique, but is also in stark contrast with more traditional styles, such as Hume’s or Kant’s. Hence, an important reason why Hegel is regarded as obscure is that many struggle with reading the *Phenomenology* as Hegel intended it to be read, because some philosophers have looked at the work as if it is meant to be a *typical* philosophical treatise. Or, to put this in a more contemporary setting, one would be hard-pressed to find *anyone* working in the analytic philosophical tradition writing in a proto-literary modernist manner, wherein the text is presented as a dynamic and reflexive cognitive teleological stream of consciousness.

So, having set aside some of the more superficial grounds for the animosity towards Hegel and his work, I would now like to discuss what I think is the more fundamental reason why Hegel is treated as the ‘poison’ of philosophy in general by analytic philosophers.

⁸ It is important to note that I use the term ‘analytic tradition’ in a *broad* sense, in order to include a wide range of philosophical movements such as logicism, Russell’s atomism, Moore’s common-sense realism, Logical Empiricism, ordinary language philosophy, analytic pragmatism, etc. Like Redding (2007) and Nuzzo (2010), I do not take the term ‘analytic tradition’ / ‘analytic philosophy’ to refer to a “monolithic bloc” (Nuzzo, 2010: 11).

⁹ Of course, this does not apply to the analytic tradition’s general difficulty with interpreting the *Science of Logic*. That difficulty seems to be caused by the triadic structure of the work itself and the very dense language that Hegel uses.

Such derision has principally emanated from accepting the traditional interpretation of Hegel's idealism as a thesis claiming that there is a single super-individual entity, *Geist*, and that all else that exists is to be thought of as part of the conscious development of this being.¹⁰ As far back as the Neo-Kantian movement in 19th century Germany,¹¹ philosophers have in general looked at the Hegelian notions of 'the Absolute', 'the Idea', 'dialectic', 'Spirit', 'Subject', 'Being', etc., which lie at the centre of Hegelianism, as instantiations of obscure concepts harking back to an elaborate and fanciful metaphysical tradition that Kant had rejected. According to Hegel's numerous critics, from Schopenhauer¹² to Popper,¹³ Hegel's theoretical philosophy is to be viewed with great hostility: the absolute idealist corpus is composed of a metaphysico-theology that is at odds with more secularised analytic concerns; Hegel's dialectical method violates the principles of logic; and his philosophy of history has eerie connotations of extreme conservative thought. In sum, for his critics, Hegelianism is "a dismal failure, representative only of Teutonic smoke, self-indulgent excess, and the ugliest prose style in the history of the German language".¹⁴ More specifically, with regard to Hegel's critique of Kant's theoretical philosophy, it seems hopeless to interpret Hegel as criticising Kant in a way that does not result in Hegelianism being simply a return to the metaphysical tradition of Plotinus, Leibniz, and others. This is because Hegel is usually treated as exemplifying the type of pre-Critical metaphysics against which Kant had reacted,¹⁵ and as advocating a return to a theological conception of philosophy to which Kant had been opposed. With regard to Hegel's natural philosophy, as Beiser writes, "it was speculative, used a priori reasoning rather than patient empirical investigations, and it seemed

¹⁰ This is also known as the 'spirit monist' view. See Charles Taylor (1975) who adopts the spirit monist interpretation. An even cruder understanding of Hegel's idealism can be attributed to Russell and Moore, who took Hegel and the British Idealists to claim that the external world does not exist.

¹¹ See Beiser, 2005: 154.

¹² "But the height of audacity in serving up pure nonsense, in stringing together senseless and extravagant mazes of words, such as had previously been known only in madhouses, was finally reached in Hegel, and became the instrument of the most barefaced general mystification that has ever taken place, with a result which will appear fabulous to posterity, and will remain as a monument to German stupidity." (*The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2: 22.)

¹³ "There is so much philosophical writing (especially in the Hegelian school) which may justly be criticized as meaningless verbiage". (K. Popper, 1963: 94).

¹⁴ R. B. Pippin, 1989: 5.

¹⁵ The following passage from William Bristow elegantly expresses this idea: "To someone who appreciates Kant's critical project – who has felt the excitement of a powerful new beginning in epistemology aroused by appreciation of it – Hegel's suspicion is bound to seem relatively shallow, even if not totally unmotivated. Hegel himself subscribes to the dictum that criticism of a philosophical system has little weight unless it engages seriously with that in the system that seems compelling to its proponents. It may seem that Hegel's objection against Kant's project of critique ... does not engage very seriously or directly with what strikes students of Kant's epistemology as its substantial core. And so Hegel's apparently dismissive criticism of Kant's critical project is dismissed in turn by Kantians. Consequently, the Hegel-Kant engagement often strikes us, I think, as philosophically sterile." (W. F. Bristow, 2007: 64)

anthropocentric, reviving final causes, occult powers, and essences”.¹⁶ Such a way of conceiving scientific enquiry became, for the Positivists, the model of how science should *not* be done. Hegel was being portrayed as the *bête noire* of the intellectual movement of the early 20th century with both philosophers and scientists unified in their contempt for his ideas.

Thanks to the traditional interpretation of Hegel as a spirit monist, analytic philosophy was subject to two competing anti-Hegelian pressures: from Russell and Moore,¹⁷ who defined themselves against Hegel generally, and from the Logical Positivists who defined themselves against Aristotelian-Hegelian metaphysics and a non-secularised conception of philosophical enquiry. What this signifies is not that Hegel’s analytic critics failed to make much of an effort to engage with him, but that they were embarrassed to attempt to, because they believed that the *Zeitgeist* had moved from religiosity to secularism, from Romanticism to scientific naturalism. It was not just that Hegel was asking the kinds of questions that were now rendered antiquarian, but that those very questions that he regarded to be of great philosophic importance were nonsensical. Hegel was seen as poisonous, because he was interpreted as being squarely opposed to the scientific and secular culture of the early twentieth-century, in which not only did European man no longer have a penchant for the Absolute, but he regarded having such a penchant as something fundamentally harmful.

II

Since the 1970s, the derogatory aspect of analytic philosophy’s *pharmakon* has been placed under great scrutiny. Hegel may have been poison to the early and middle generation of analytic thinkers, but by the turn of the 21st century, Hegel was being seen by some (but not generally, though) as a *cure* for analytic philosophy, rather than its poison. By this, I mean that not only were some analytic philosophers rejecting the portrayal of Hegel as the *bête noire* of philosophy, they also began to explicitly use Hegelian ideas in certain topics. At first, features of Hegel’s social and political philosophy were being applied to contemporary problems in those particular disciplines. This is most clearly seen in the work of Charles Taylor at the time.¹⁸ However, some analytic philosophers, namely John McDowell,¹⁹ and Robert Brandom²⁰ then started to explicitly use Hegelian ideas in their work on epistemology

¹⁶ Beiser, 2008: 11.

¹⁷ See Hylton (1993), and Candlish (2007).

¹⁸ I have in mind Taylor’s communitarian *magnum opus*, *Sources of the Self* (1989).

¹⁹ See McDowell (1994, 2009).

²⁰ See Brandom (1994, 2002, 2009). It is important to note that the Pittsburgh ‘neo-Hegelians’ trace their Hegelian influence to a large extent in Sellars’s rejection of the Myth of the Given in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (1997).

and philosophy of mind. I think that there are three reasons for this “Hegel-Renaissance”.²¹ Firstly, since Saul Kripke (1972, 1980) and Hilary Putnam (1975, 1978) made talk about natural kinds acceptable, and Putnam, though a pragmatist and not an Aristotelian, posed objections to the fact/value distinction²² in conjunction with Elizabeth Anscombe²³ and Philippa Foot,²⁴ Aristotle’s stock, after years in steep and steady decline, began to rise again. And if positive talk about Aristotle was now being encouraged, then it is natural that positive talk about Hegel would eventually follow, given Hegel’s intimate connection to him.²⁵ Secondly, the traditional interpretation of Hegel has come under heavy criticism in recent decades.

For, in contrast to the spirit monist reading of Hegel, two rival schools of thought have recently emerged: the first of these camps is the non-metaphysical interpretation of Hegel, as advanced by J. N. Findlay (1958), Klaus Hartmann (1972), Terry Pinkard (1994, 2000), and Robert Brandom (1999, 2002, 2009).²⁶ All these philosophers agree that there is ultimately nothing in the Hegelian text that genuinely supports the spirit monist interpretation, and that the way one ought to understand Hegel is by regarding him in a thoroughly non-metaphysical manner.²⁷ Findlay suggests that Hegel’s concerns are restricted to providing a criterion for explanation which regards teleology as indispensable for our understanding of nature. Hartmann interprets Hegel as a category theorist who is interested in developing a conceptual framework necessary for meaningful discourse about the objects of experience. Pinkard claims that Hegel should be viewed as a social epistemologist concerned with the development of norms through social interaction. Brandom interprets Hegel as a normative inferentialist who aimed to ground an inferential conception of meaning on the logical

²¹ Nuzzo, 2010: 2.

²² See Putnam (2002).

²³ See Anscombe (1958).

²⁴ See Foot (1978, 2001).

²⁵ See Lear (1988), Beiser (2005), and Stern (2008) for important discussions of Hegel’s relation to Aristotle.

²⁶ As one has immediately noticed, I have not included Robert Pippin (1989, 1997, 2008) in this school of thought, where if anything Pippin’s various works on Hegel have been normally regarded as the flagship anti-metaphysical/non-metaphysical interpretations of Hegelianism. The reason why I have not included Pippin in the same general camp as Hartmann, Pinkard, and Brandom is because Pippin has recently explained at the 2013 Hegel Society of Great Britain annual conference that he does in fact regard Hegel as a metaphysician and that he is opposed to the non-metaphysical school of thought. Interestingly, what Pippin said appears to clearly contrast with his claim in his *Hegel’s Idealism* that he “also propose[s] to defend a nonmetaphysical interpretation of Hegel” (Pippin, 1989: 6).

²⁷ It is important to note that the non-metaphysical reading of Hegel differs from what can be loosely called the Strawsonian-inspired view of Hegel, as espoused by Allen Wood. Wood, like Peter Strawson did with Kantianism, sees a repugnant side to Hegelianism but also takes there to be something of philosophic value to Hegel’s philosophy, particularly Hegel’s analysis of the state and morality. Consequently, Wood tries to separate Hegel’s ethics and political philosophy from Hegel’s theoretical concerns, cf. Wood (1990). This is very similar to the Strawsonian tendency to separate Kant’s transcendental programme and theory of experience from transcendental idealism.

notions of mediation and determinate negation. Though there are important differences between these readings of Hegel, the most important point is that Findlay, Hartmann, Pinkard, and Brandom reject *any* metaphysical understanding of Hegel partly on the basis of interpretive charity: this is made clear by Robert Pippin, who writes:

... how could he have accepted, as he did, Kant's revelations about the fundamental inadequacies of the metaphysical tradition, could have enthusiastically agreed with Kant that the metaphysics of the "beyond," of substance, and of traditional views of God and infinity were forever discredited, and then could have promptly created a systematic metaphysics as if he had never heard of Kant's critical epistemology. Just attributing moderate philosophic intelligence to Hegel should at least make one hesitate before construing him as a post-Kantian philosopher with a precritical metaphysics.²⁸

The second camp that rejects the spirit monist interpretation is what has been called the revised metaphysical interpretation.²⁹ This has been advanced by Beiser (1993, 2005), Thomas Wartenburg (1993), Rolf-Peter Horstmann (2006), Stephen Houlgate (2005, 2006), Robert Stern (2002, 2008, 2009), Ken Westphal (2003), and James Kreines (2006, 2008). All these philosophers agree with the non-metaphysical school of thought that the spirit monist interpretation of Hegel is not correct. Beiser et al. do not attribute to Hegel the type of baroque metaphysics, *pace* the more traditional interpretation of Taylor. Furthermore, like the non-metaphysical reading, the revised metaphysical reading stresses how important Kant's rejection of transcendent metaphysics was in shaping Hegel's philosophical commitments. However, in opposition to the non-metaphysical interpretation, Beiser et al. reject the idea that Hegel's acceptance of the Kantian critique of metaphysics prevents the motivation and development of a genuine metaphysical system of a distinctively Hegelian kind.³⁰ As Beiser writes:

There is indeed much truth behind the non-metaphysical interpretations. These scholars rightly emphasise Hegel's rejection of traditional metaphysics, his endorsement of Kant's critique of Leibnizian-Wolffian rationalism, and his purely immanent conception of philosophy. On the other hand, these points do not imply that Hegel was not a metaphysician at all. If Hegel abjured metaphysics as a science of the transcendent, he still pursued it as a science of the immanent ... For Hegel, the problem with traditional metaphysics is not that it attempted to know the infinite, but that it had a *false*

²⁸ Pippin, 1989: 7.

²⁹ I am using Paul Redding's terminology from his *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* entry on Hegel.

³⁰ An important point must be noted regarding the exact significance of the Kantian critique of metaphysics: Kant did not criticise metaphysics in the way that Hume and the Logical Positivists did; he did not regard the discipline *per se* to be a meaningless philosophical enterprise. Rather, Kant's concern was to put metaphysics on the "secure course of a science" (Bxiv) – i.e. purge the discipline of any fallacies and obscurities by prioritising logic and epistemology as the first stages of any philosophical enquiry. See Adrian Moore's discussion of Kant in Moore (2012). This topic is also discussed in O'Neill (1992), and Grier (2001).

interpretation of the infinite as something transcending the finite world of ordinary experience.³¹

In other words, the revised metaphysical interpretation of Hegel sees Hegel as opposing *transcendent* metaphysics, and as espousing a form of immanent (naturalist) metaphysics that combines elements of Aristotelianism with Spinozism.³² In this way, Hegel is understood to have pre-Kantian ambitions whilst developing a philosophically *intelligible* enquiry into the basic structure of reality. The ‘extravagance’ of Hegelianism then,³³ according to this interpretation, is *not* its *particular* understanding of the infinite, etc. but rather is its philosophical scope and systematic ambition.

Third, in conjunction with the rehabilitation of crucial areas of Hegel’s theoretical philosophy has been the development of a hybrid analytic-Hegelian epistemology and philosophy of mind, principally inspired by Wilfrid Sellars’s famous rejection of the Myth of the Given. Such a philosophical position is to be found in the work of McDowell (1994) and Brandom (1994, 2000, 2002), who are inspired by Hegel in *different* ways. With regard to McDowell, he is influenced by Hegel’s rejection of non-conceptual content and Hegel’s opposition to conservative forms of philosophical naturalism, to the extent that not only does he regard Hegel as a useful ally in supportive of a direct realist account of perception, McDowell also enlists Hegel as an important friend in overturning the British Empiricist-inspired model of experience. By this, I mean that McDowell sees Hegel as building on a crucial insight of Kant’s – that without concepts, representational content is blind – to the point where experience is no longer *just* providing causal inputs, but that these inputs in and of themselves possess conceptual content. This expansion of Kant’s Discursivity Thesis, as McDowell has it, is necessary to overcome the apparent gap between mind and world.³⁴

With regard to Brandom, he *explicitly* claims to have a far-reaching debt to Hegel in the development of his pragmatist conception of norms and his inferentialist theory of meaning. According to Brandom, norms are “social achievements”,³⁵ in that what is deemed appropriate or inappropriate in a society is not determined by any completely mind-independent stuff out there in the world. Rather, norms are established by the *intersubjective* and rational practices between rational agents in a society. In other words, norms get their

³¹ Beiser, 2005: 55.

³² To put this in the form of a slogan, the revised metaphysical interpretation regards Hegel as a post-Kantian Aristotelian.

³³ The charge of extravagance is levelled by Ameriks (1991). See Stern (2008) for a response.

³⁴ See Sedgwick (1997) and Stern (1999) for helpful detailed discussions of Hegel and McDowell.

³⁵ R. Brandom, 2002: 216.

normative purchase by virtue of being assented to and acknowledged by a community of rational agents. Crucially, though, the practice of assenting to and acknowledging normative constraints and normative entitlements does *not* involve a crude constructivism or crude anti-realism. What this particular form of social engagement involves is that “the precise content of those implicit norms is determined through a ‘process of *negotiation*’ involving ourselves *and* those who attribute norms to us”.³⁶ By virtue of being a process of *negotiation* as opposed to a non-negotiated process, what is deemed appropriate or inappropriate is never *fixed* but always subject to “further assessment, challenge, defence, and correction”.³⁷ Given this, Brandom clearly takes Hegel’s fallibilist epistemology and his theory of recognition to play an important philosophical role in explaining how norms are constituted.

Very briefly now turning to Brandom’s inferentialist theory of meaning and its Hegelian influences, Brandom claims that the content of a concept consists principally in the inferential connections in which it stands to other concepts – as he puts it himself, concepts are “inferentially articulated”.³⁸ For example, the meaning of *blue* on Brandom’s inferentialist picture requires a language-user to understand blue’s relationship with *other* colours. Such an inferential process necessarily involves *determinate negations*, insofar as in order to identify blue from other colours and to identify another specific colour from blue, one needs to contrast one concept from another. By advocating this inferentialist theory of meaning in terms of mediating concepts with their respective determinate negations, Brandom is clearly influenced by Hegel’s discussion of Sense-Certainty, where one of Hegel’s goals in that chapter is to reject the idea that an unmediated, non-holistic and non-inferential conceptual framework can establish the possibility of reference.³⁹

Given the rehabilitation of Aristotle, the nuanced and sophisticated readings of Hegel as a serious modern philosopher, and the neo-Hegelian movement in Pittsburgh, one may think that the Hegel-Renaissance is in full dialectical flow and Hegel is now met with chants of *Vivat Rex!*. Of course, such a view is rather presumptuous. Hegel is certainly not the darling of the analytic tradition; he is not the first name down on an undergraduate’s reading list; and he remains rather toxic in particularly orthodox analytic departments. Having said this, there is still good reason to think that *slowly but surely* Hegel is becoming more and more of a substantive philosophical figure in the Anglo-American philosophical world. The reason for this is that analytic philosophers are beginning to recognise that Hegelian concepts and ideas

³⁶ S. Houlgate, 2007: 139.

³⁷ Brandom, 1994: 647.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 622.

³⁹ See Houlgate (2007) and Pippin (2007) for helpful discussions of Hegel’s relation with Brandom.

can provide an illuminating perspective on philosophical problems besetting the analytic tradition, such as the mind-world relation, the individual-society relation, moral obligation, emergent properties, the nature-normativity debate, and questions concerning the possibility of metaphysics.

So, what does this mean for the analytic tradition itself? To answer this, I would like to offer a reflection on Richard Rorty's understanding of Brandom's work in relation to mainstream analytic philosophy. According to Rorty, "Brandom's work can usefully be seen as an attempt to usher analytic philosophy from its Kantian to its Hegelian stage".⁴⁰ What Rorty means here is prophetic, but not entirely clear. Even so, I think he is making a thought-provoking point: analytic philosophy is not an ahistorical intellectual monolith that is an *idée fixe* since its founding at the turn of the 20th century. Rather, in perhaps an ironic way, analytic philosophy is much like the phenomenological subject in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: it is fallible and multi-dimensional and *moves* through various stages and positions in an attempt to achieve rational satisfaction. Where the analytic tradition once aimed to achieve rational satisfaction by admonishing Hegel, its slow and steady rapprochement with Hegel may well indicate a *self-directed* need to re-evaluate its core web of beliefs if it is to have rational satisfaction. Crucially, though, from my perspective, analytic philosophy's 'Hegelian stage' would not be identifiable with a mere acceptance or adoption of Hegelian ideas and total contempt for Russell and Moore. Rather, what such a stage would in fact involve is a gradual removal of arbitrary and fixed divisions. Hegel, therefore, provides the clues to a much broader *metaphilosophical* paradigm shift in the analytic tradition, a paradigm shift that goes beyond Hegelianism becoming hegemonic in analytic thinking.

One prominent example of this Hegel-inspired *broader* metaphilosophical paradigm shift occurring in the analytic tradition is the development of analytic phenomenology. Beginning with David Smith & Ronald McIntyre (1982), analytic philosophy of mind has gradually opened itself more and more to phenomenological approaches and phenomenological methodologies, integrating cognitive scientific accounts of intentionality with the work of Husserl and Brentano.⁴¹ This practice of blending two traditionally *opposed* philosophical traditions has continued in the 21st century and is most clearly evidenced in the seminal work of Shaun Gallagher (2005) and Gallagher & Zahavi (2008).⁴² Of course, providing a

⁴⁰ Rorty, 1997: 8-9.

⁴¹ See also Dreyfus and Hall (1982), and Mohanty (1989).

⁴² Smith and Thomasson (2005) is another important cross-disciplinary work. Perhaps more importantly in some way, Gallagher's and Zahavi's most direct impact on the analytic phenomenological scene is their founding of the cross-disciplinary journal *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*.

complete explanation for why the analytic tradition has opened itself more and more to the phenomenological school is the task of another paper. Nonetheless, I think there is compelling reason to claim that *part* of the rapprochement with Husserl and other phenomenologists is subtly connected with the rapprochement with Hegel: I earlier argued that one of the key reasons for the Hegel Renaissance in the Anglo-American world was the rehabilitation of Aristotelian concerns for essences and the interrelation of nature and normativity. Just like overcoming problems with Aristotelianism is necessary for taking Hegel seriously again, so is overcoming problems with Hegelianism necessary for taking Continental Philosophy seriously in the analytic world. This is because for the vast majority of orthodox analytic philosophers, Hegel is the poster-boy of the Continental tradition, and that by consequence if the analytic reception of Hegel is becoming considerably warmer, then there is good reason to suppose *other* flagship Continental philosophical schools of thought will be positively integrated into analytic philosophy. And if phenomenology is becoming increasingly philosophically important in analytic philosophy of mind, then it may well be the case that *further* barriers will melt away once phenomenological and naturalistic enquiry cross-pollinate. This is what I take to signify by the ‘Hegelian stage’ of analytic philosophy, whose *telos* of enquiry is beautifully envisioned by Sellars, who writes:

Or does the reader not recognise Jones as Man himself in the middle of his journey from the grunts and groans of the cave to the subtle and polydimensional discourse of the drawing room, the laboratory, and the study, the language of Henry and William James, of Einstein and of the philosophers who, in their efforts to break out of discourse to an *arche* beyond discourse, have provided the most curious dimension of all? (*EPM*: §63)

It is, therefore, perhaps fitting that a Hegelian principle – the principle of internal critique – plays a significant role in not just analytic philosophy’s reconciliation with Hegel himself but in the gradual erosion of the analytic-Continental divide as well. As Rorty writes:

philosophers in non-anglophone countries typically think quite hard about Hegel, whereas the rather skimpy training in the history of philosophy which most analytic philosophers receive often tempts them to skip straight from Kant to Frege. It is agreeable to imagine a future in which the tiresome ‘analytic-Continental split’ is looked back upon as an unfortunate, temporary breakdown of communication – a future in which Sellars and Habermas, Davidson and Gadamer, Putnam and Derrida, Rawls and Foucault, are seen as fellow-travellers on the same journey, fellow-citizens of what Michael Oakeshott called a *civitas pelegrina*”.⁴³

⁴³ Rorty, 1997: 11.

For most of its time, the analytic tradition has wanted to isolate itself from the work of thinkers like Hegel, seeing the Continent as a breeding ground of obscurantism, pseudophilosophy, and charlatanism. Thankfully, though, the period of antagonism towards the Continent has slowly begun to improve, because traditional caricatures have been found to be nothing really more than just caricature. Myths and legends have been revealed as simply myths and legends. Hegel, initially the enemy of the Anglo-American naturalist community, is gradually becoming accepted as a modern philosopher of substantial philosophical value; and the transition from villain to possible hero mirrors the analytic tradition opening itself more and more to the Continental tradition, which would not only suggest that there is the possibility of dialogue and mutual recognition, but that such a possibility is being realised.

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